

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 798

By Yarbro

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Judge Gilbert Stroud Merritt, Jr., of Nashville.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Judge Gilbert Stroud Merritt, Jr., of Nashville; and

WHEREAS, a prominent member of Tennessee's legal community for more than fifty years, Judge Gil Merritt was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who was dedicated to his family, to the Constitution, and to the pursuit of equal justice under the law for all Americans, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or incarceration status; and

WHEREAS, a native Nashvillian, Gilbert Stroud Merritt, Jr., was born on January 17, 1936, and attended Castle Heights Military Academy in Lebanon; he received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Yale University in 1957 and his Bachelor of Law degree from Vanderbilt University Law School in 1960; and

WHEREAS, Judge Merritt served as assistant dean and instructor at Vanderbilt University Law School from 1960 to 1961 before earning a Master of Law degree from Harvard Law School in 1962; and

WHEREAS, in 1966, he was appointed to serve as the U.S. Attorney for Middle Tennessee by President Lyndon B. Johnson, during which time he appointed both the first woman, Martha Craig Daughtrey, and the first Black person, Carlton Petway, to serve as assistant U.S. Attorney for the Middle Tennessee district; and

WHEREAS, Judge Merritt began his remarkable career on the bench in 1977, when he was nominated by President Jimmy Carter to serve on the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals; he served on the 6th Circuit for the next forty-four years, rising to the role of chief judge of the court before taking senior status in January 2001, but still retained an active role in the court for the next twenty years; and

WHEREAS, in the 1990s, President Bill Clinton considered Judge Merritt for a nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court to fill a vacant seat before he eventually selected Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg; and

WHEREAS, prior to joining the federal bench, Judge Merritt practiced law with Boulton, Hunt, Cummings and Connors and with Gullett Sanford Robinson and Merritt; he had also served as an associate attorney for Metropolitan Nashville/Davidson County government; and

WHEREAS, an active part of his community, Judge Gil Merritt was a faithful member of Christ Episcopal Cathedral in Nashville, which he served in numerous capacities over the years; and

WHEREAS, preceded in death by his first wife, Louise Clark Fort Merritt, Judge Merritt is survived by his three children, Stroud Merritt, Louise Merritt, and Eli Merritt; and his three grandchildren, Alejandro Merritt, Cameron Merritt, and Fields Livingston; and

WHEREAS, Judge Merritt leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Judge Gilbert Stroud Merritt, Jr., reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Judge Merritt.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to

the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.